

2003PO6018WOUS
Michael SCHWARZBAUER *et al.*
Appl. No.: 10/554,412

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims is set forth below. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for orienting flat items of mail towards a narrow edge using a U-shaped conveying channel with a driven underframe belt, in which the flat items of mail are conveyed one after the other via a determined path, in an upright position towards a narrow edge without being jammed, the method comprising the steps of:

- measuring the thickness of the respective item of mail to be oriented, before ~~this the item of mail~~ reaches the conveying channel, and
- changing the distance of the lateral limit stops or limiting sections of the conveying channel corresponding to respectively measured item of mail thickness, such that at the end of the conveying channel the respective item of mail is oriented towards the lower narrow edge by virtue of its own gravity and the distance of the lateral limit stops of the conveying channel from every item of mail during transport through the conveying channel is only wide enough for the item not to collapse at all nor to collapse partially even if its intrinsic stiffness is poor.

2. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the lateral limit stops is designed to be flexible, and that from the known transport speed and a detected front and/or back edge, the length of the item of mail and the position of each item of mail during its transport through the conveying channel is determined as a function of the time and this data allows the lateral limit stops across the length of the conveying channel to be changed in terms of their distance from one another for each item of mail, such that lateral limiting sections of the flexible lateral limit stops adjusted to the respective thickness and length of the item of mail, like standing waves, move in conjunction with items of mail.

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3. (currently amended) A device for orienting flat items of mail towards a narrow edge with a U-shaped conveying channel with a propelled underframe belt, in which the flat items of mail are conveyed one after the other over a determined path, in an upright position on a narrow edge without jamming,

the device comprising:

- a measuring device for determining the thickness of the respective item of mail to be oriented, before this has reached the conveying channel, and
- an adjusting mechanism engaging with at least one lateral limit stop for changing the distance between the lateral limit stop or between lateral limitation sections of the conveying channel corresponding to the respectively measured thickness of the item of mail, such that at the end of the conveying channel the item of mail is oriented towards the lower narrow edge by virtue of its own gravity and the distance of the lateral limit stops of the conveying channel from each item of mail during transport through the conveying channel is only wide enough for the item not to collapse at all nor to collapse partially even if its intrinsic stiffness is poor.

4. (previously presented) The device according to claim 3, wherein lateral transport belts circulating at the same speed as the underframe belt are provided as lateral limit stops of the conveying channel guided via rollers.

5. (cancelled)

6. (previously presented) The device according to claim 4, wherein the adjusting mechanism at each roller support engages with at least one transport belt and is controlled such that the lateral transport belts are changed as a function of the length of the item of mail and the position of each item of mail during its transport through the conveying channel, which is determined with the aid of the known transport speed and a detected leading edge and/or trailing edge, via the length of the conveying channel in their

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distance to one another for each item of mail, such that the transport belt sections adjusted to the respective thickness and length of the item of mail move in conjunction with the items of mail as standing waves.

7. (currently amended) The device according to claim 4, wherein with distances ~~of this type~~ between the items of mail with which only one item of mail is located in the conveying channel, the adjusting mechanism is designed such that all adjustable rollers are only collectively adjustable by the same amount.